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Verification in all its aspects, including the role of the United Nations in the field of verification

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Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 52/31 of 9 December 1997, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to it at its fifty-fourth session on further views received from Member States pursuant to resolution 50/61 of 12 December 1995. The views received pursuant to the latter resolution were contained in a report of the Secretary-General on verification in all its aspects, including the role of the United Nations in the field of verification, dated 6 August 1997, to the General Assembly at its fifty-second session (A/52/269) and related to a report of the Secretary-General, dated 22 September 1990, on the same subject (A/50/377).

II. Developments

2. Since 1997, the international community has continued its efforts in the field of the verification of treaties in a number of areas.

3. With respect to weapons of mass destruction, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons has pursued its efforts to ensure the full implementation of the verification provisions of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction. As the Director-General of the organization reported to the fourth session of the Conference of States Parties in June 1999, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, over the course of its two years' existence, has undertaken 500 inspections and its inspectors have witnessed the destruction of about 3,000 tons of chemical agents and of more than 700,000 munitions and containers. The Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization has continued to concentrate on setting up the global verification regime envisaged in the Treaty so that it may be operational by the time the Treaty enters into force. It has reported that its first technical training programme, to familiarize operators with a specific verification technology and the use of instruments, was held at Vienna in October 1998, followed by in-depth training at facilities in Argentina, Norway and the United States of America. The parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and Their Destruction have, over the past year, intensified their efforts to formulate an efficient, cost-effective and practical verification protocol to the Convention.

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4. Since the 1997 report on verification, the system for monitoring compliance with the provisions of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction has begun to take shape. It relies in part on annual reporting of transparency measures by Governments on various categories of information, such as the total number of stockpiled anti-personnel mines, the location of mined areas, the status of programmes for the conversion or decommissioning of production facilities and the status of programmes for destruction. It was agreed at the first Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention, held in Maputo, in May 1999, that easy access by all to these reports would improve the coordination and effectiveness of global mine-clearance; thus, like data reported to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, these data will be published on the Internet.

5. With respect to the United Nations Special Commission, as of 16 December 1998, activities to verify Iraq's compliance with relevant Security Council resolutions ceased.

6. During the past 18 months, the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research has undertaken and published research in the area of verification (see the report of the Institute (A/54/...)).

Annex
Views received from Member States

Mexico

[Original: Spanish]

The Government of Mexico considers that verification in all its aspects is an essential component of the arms limitation and disarmament programme. Adequate and satisfactory verification of international agreements is indispensable in order to create an atmosphere of confidence and security. Multilateral verification adds an additional element of trust, thanks to its independent and impartial nature, particularly in the case of countries that do not have the means for determining on their own whether or not the obligations of other States have been met.

Mexico is persuaded that the present international atmosphere is conducive to the implementation of cooperation activities and the strengthening of United Nations capabilities in the promotion of peace and collective security. With the establishment of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization and the current negotiations on possible verification measures in connection with the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction, it might be possible to develop joint verification services as the first step in a process that should culminate with the creation of a United Nations agency that would be responsible for verification in all its aspects. Such a process would also encourage the improvement and creation of new technologies in this field; in particular, this would benefit those countries that are least able to channel resources to such research.

Mexico attaches great importance to the activities that have been carried out in the field of verification, and participated in the group of governmental experts on verification in all its aspects, including the role of the United Nations in the field of verification, which met in 1994 and 1995. Mexico supports the recommendations set forth in the report of the group of experts (A/50/377), particularly on the establishment of new principles and guidelines for consensus in the field of verification.

Mexico supported General Assembly resolutions 50/61 and 52/31, on verification in all its aspects, including the role of the United Nations in the field of verification. In so doing, it reiterated its commitment to the full implementation of the Programme of Action of the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, held in 1978, in particular paragraphs 91 and 92, as well as article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, in which the Parties undertook to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control, through suitable non-discriminatory and non-intrusive mechanisms and procedures that do not jeopardize the economic and social development of countries.